Mr. *Barnard's* SERMON,

upon *December* 25. 1729.

with an APPENDIX.

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upon

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BRITISH MUSEUM

THE

Certainty, TIME, and END,

OF THE

BIRTH

OF OUR

Lord and Saviour

JESUS CHRIST:

with the

Accomplishment of several of the *Prophecys*, relating thereto.

A SERMON, at the *Lecture*, in *Marblehead*, *December* 25. 1729.

To which is added,

An APPENDIX, attempting more clearly to State, the *true Year* of our Lord's *Nativity*.

By *John Barnard*, V. D. M.
of *Marblehead*.

BOSTON: Printed for *S. Gerrish*, at the lower end of *Cornhill*. 1731.

THE

Certainty,

TIME, and END,

OF THE

BIRTH

OF OUR

Lord and Saviour

JESUS CHRIST.

BRITISH MUSEUM

Accomplishment [illegible] the Prophecy,

[illegible]

A SERMON, at the Temple, in Salisbury,

[illegible]

To which is added,

An APPENDIX, attempting more clear-
ly to state, the true Year of our Lords
Nativity.

By John Barnard, M. A.

[illegible]

LONDON: Printed for J. Clarke, at the
Bible and Crown in Cornhill. 1751.

Certainty, Time and End,

OF THE

Birth of CHRIST.

LUKE II. 10, 11.

And the Angel said unto them, Fear not; for behold, I bring you good Tydings of great Joy, which shall be to all People: For unto you is born this Day, in the City of David, a Saviour, which is CHRIST *the* LORD.

AS the Time drew near for the Appearance of the *great God, and our Saviour*, to dwell with Men on the Earth, there was a wonderful Expectation, among almost all Nations, of some great Personage, to be born into the World, who should be remarkable, beyond any that had gone before him: To which

which the Prophet *Haggai*, one of the laſt of the Prophets, under the Old Teſtament, refers, when he ſays, *Hag.* II. 7. *The Deſire of all Nations ſhall come, and I will fill this Houſe* (meaning the Second Temple, then a building, and near finiſhed,) *with Glory*; that is, by the Preſence of Him whom all Nations, † and the *Jews* * eſpecially, deſired and looked for. This Expectation, doubtleſs, had it's Riſe among the Nations, from the *Jews*, who were diſperſed over *Syria*, *Chaldea*, *Perſia*, and *Greece*, at, and after their Captivity by *Nebuchadnezzar*. Their Diſcourſes about the promiſed *Meſſiah*, and the great Deliverance they looked for from Him, and the Prophecys relating to His Coming, contained in their canonical Books, very naturally led the learned among the Nations, who, we

† *Pluribus perſuaſio inerat antiquis Sacerdotum literis contineri, eo ipſo Tempore ut valeſceret Oriens, profectique Judæa, rerum potirentur.*

Tac. *His.* Lib. 5. *Cluverus* quotes a Paſſage out of *Suidas*, wherein he tells us, that *Auguſtus* ſent to the *Pythian* Oracle to enquire who ſhould ſucceed him, and received this Anſwer from *Apollo*.

Hebræus Puer injungit, Elœum Dominator, Hacce Domo fugere et ſurſum me inferna ſubire:
Ergo tacens aris poſthac diſcedite noſtris.
Cluv. His. 253.

* Hence is that in *Matth.* xi, 3. *Art thou He that ſhould come? or look we for another?* And indeed their fond Expectation of the *Meſſiah* about this Time gave the Advantage to ſeveral Impoſtors, as *Theudas*, and *Judas* of *Galilee* to deceive ſo many of them to their ruin. See Dr. *Owen* Exer. Heb. 125.

may

may reasonably suppose, had some little Acquaintance with the Jewish Writings, * to expect some such mighty Person, as they spoke of. The Prophecy of *Daniel*, (*a*) while he resided in the *Persian* Court, had so plainly pointed out the *Messiah*, the *Prince*, and the Time of His Appearance, that they could not be wholly Ignorant of Him; and therefore, towards the Period of the Prefixed Time, were looking and waiting for the Consolation of Israel.

The Angel *Gabriel* first makes known the Prophecy to *Daniel*, and about, 532 ‖ Years after, when the Time determined for the *Messiah*'s Coming, was near at Hand, God sends the same *Gabriel*, first to *Zacharias*, to acquaint him, that he should have a Son, by his Wife *Elisabeth*, tho' they had gone Childless, till they were both well stricken in Years, and that this their Son should be the Fore-runner of the *Messiah* (*b*); and within a few Months after to the *Virgin Mary*, to notify to her, that she should conceive and bear a Son, and

* Doubtless the famous *Sibilline* Prophecys, were Originally some Scraps and Fragments of the *Jewish*.

(*a*) *Dan.* IX. 24.

‖ *Daniel* had the Revelation in the first Year of *Cyaxares*, or *Darius* the *Mede* who was Son of *Astiages*, otherwise called *Ahasuerus* 5. and about 80 Years before the Decree was given forth, which he speaks of in his 9th ch. For the first of *Darius* was *an. J. P.* 4256. and the Decree was given *an J. P.* 4256. and *Zac.* Vision was *a P. J.* 4708.

(*b*) *Luke.* I. 13, 17.

According to Dr. *Prid.* Account; and therefore from *Dan.* to *Zac.* Vision is 532 Years.

call

call His Name JESUS (*c*), who ſhould be the *Immanuel*, or God with us.

At the Time of the Birth of this wonderous and holy Child *Jeſus*, (perhaps,) the ſame *Gabriel* is made the Joyful Meſſenger, of this glad Tydings, to the Shepherds, who were watching over their Flock, by Night, near *Bethlehem*: Of which we have an Account in my Context.

The Birth of Chriſt was attended with a ſtrange Appearance in the Heavens, for an unuſual Light, or Star, ſhone over *Bethlehem*, the Place of His Nativity, at the Time of it (*d*): Which, (no doubt) was the ſame Star, that the Wiſe Men of the Eaſt, or certain *Magi* in *Perſia*, ſaw in their own Land, and were directed by to find out the Place of our Lord's Nativity (*e*).

This Light; or Star, the Shepherds, that were watching over their Flocks, near the City of *David*, beheld, and were ſurpriſed at ſo uncommon an Appearance in the Heavens. But the Angel appeared to them, and ſaid, *Fear not; for behold, I bring you good Tydings of great Joy, which ſhall be unto all People; for unto you is born, this Day, in the City of David, a Saviour, which is Chriſt, the Lord.* The Shepherds encouraged, and directed, by the Angel, went immediately to *Bethlehem*,

(*c*) *Luke* I. 26, 31.
(*d*) *Luke* II. 9
(*e*) *Matth.* II. 1, 2, 9.

and

and there found it as the Angel had told them (a).

There are several things observable in the Words of my Text; but there are but Two or Three, which I shall more particularly take Notice of, to discourse unto you on, at this Time, and upon this Occasion. As,

I. The Birth, or Incarnation of JESUS CHRIST, the Son of GOD.

II. The Time of His Birth, or when it was.

III. The great End and Design of His Incarnation and Birth. I shall begin with the first of these; and accordingly,

I. I am to consider the *Birth*, or Incarnation of JESUS CHRIST, the Son of GOD. *Unto you there is born, Christ the Lord.* And here, there are several Things worthy our Consideration, with respect to the Birth of Christ; as,

I. The Certainty of the Birth, and Incarnation of Christ the Son of GOD.

II. Of whom he was born, and

III. The Place of His Nativity, where he was born. I shall offer something to each of these. And

I. I shall consider the *Certainty* of the Birth and Incarnation of JESUS CHRIST, the Son of God.

And what can be more evident and certain than this is? What that we do not see with

(a) Luke ii. 16.

our Eyes, is confirmed to us by ſo many, and various kinds of Witneſſes? The Angel publiſhed it to the Shepherds, aſſuring them, that *unto you is born a Saviour, Chriſt the Lord*: That is, the promiſed *Meſſiah*, the Son of God, and Saviour of the World. And this the Shepherds had full Proof and Evidence of, when they went to *Bethlehem*, and according to what the Angel had told them, found *Mary* the Mother, and *Joſeph*, the reputed Father, and *the Babe lying in a Manger*.

This was further confirmed by the Wiſe Men of the Eaſt. For they (concluding the Strange Star they had ſeen in the Heavens, was an Indication of the Birth of the great Prince, ſpoken of in the *Jewiſh* Writings, and which the World was now earneſtly looking for) after they had travelled ſome Hundreds of Miles from *Perſia*, to ſatisfy their Curioſity about this wonderful Phænomenon, at length came to *Jeruſalem*, the Metropolis of *Judea*, near to which the Star, or Light, had been ſeen pendant †, and enquire, *where is He that is born King of the Jews? For we have ſeen His Star in the Eaſt*: And when they were informed, by the learned Men among the *Jews*, that *Bethlehem* was to be the Place of the Nativity of the *Meſſiah*, they travelled thither; and the Star, which they

† or perhaps, moving from the Eaſt to the Weſt, towards *Jeruſalem*; as Mr. *Whiſton* ſuppoſes, *Theor.* p. 165.

had

had ſeen in the Eaſt, appeared again to them, and went before them, until it ſtood over the Place where the young Child lay, and ſo directed them to the particular Houſe, in this miraculous manner, that they might not be impoſed upon by any ſuppoſitious Birth; and *they came into the Houſe, and ſaw the young Child with Mary His Mother, and fell down and worſhipped Him, — and preſented unto Him, Gold and Frankincenſe, and Myrrh* (*a*). Thus they confeſſed Him to be GOD, by the Adoration they pay'd to Him, at the ſame Time that their Senſes convinced them, that He was really MAN, partaking of the ſame Fleſh and Blood with themſelves.

Beſides there were many Witneſſes at the Birth of *Chriſt*. For when *Joſeph* and *Mary* had travelled from *Nazareth* to *Bethlehem*, to be taxed, or enrolled †, that Decree of *Auguſtus*, which neceſſitated the *Jews* to retire to their own City, to which they and their Families originally belonged, had brought a great Concourſe of People to *Bethlehem*, ſo that the *Inn*, where the Mother of our Lord took up her Lodgings, was ſo full, that ſhe could have no Conveniency, anſwerable to

(*a*) *Matth.* 2. 1. —— 11.

† The Taxing ſpoken of in *Luke* II. 1. was only an Enrollment of the People, in order to be taxed; and the Tax was not levyed upon them till ſeveral Years after, when *Cyrenius* was Governour of *Syria*. v. 2. See Dr. *Prid* con. vol 4 p. 918, 919.

her Circumſtances of falling into Travail, and therefore they layd the Young Child *in a Manger, becauſe there was no room for them in the Inn*; which the Evangeliſt *Luke* takes particular notice of, *Ch.* II. *v.* 7. From whence it is plain, that, from the great Multitude of Travellers then preſent, there could be no Fraud in this Birth, but *Mary* really brought forth her firſt born Son.

And further, *Herod* the King, fearing the Loſs of his Kingdom, from this Child, who was ſtyled *the King of the Jews*, by the Wiſe Men of the Eaſt, and ſlaying all the Young Children in *Bethlehem*, from two Years old, and under, (*b*) that he might prevent the Evil which he feared, adds Confirmation to the Truth and Certainty of the Incarnation of our Lord.

This Child, thus born into the World, was no other than the Accompliſhment of the ancient Promiſe of the *Meſſiah*, the Son of God, appearing in the human Nature: For it was the Divine *Logos*, the Eternal Son of God, that *became Man*, and was born of a Woman. Hence our Lord ſaid, *Joh* III. 16. *God ſo loved the World that he gave His only begotten Son.* And thus at the Baptiſm of our Saviour, it was declared by an audible Voice from Heaven, *Matt.* III. 17. *This is my beloved Son:* And the Devils themſelves confeſſed Him

(*b*) *Matt.* 2 16.

to

to be the Son of God, saying, *Matt.* VIII. 29. *What have we to do with Thee, Jesus, thou Son of God.* So true is it, what the Apostle *John* tells us, *Ch.* I. 14. *The Word was made Flesh, and dwelt among us, and we beheld His Glory, the Glory of the only begotten of the Father, full of Grace and Truth.* Thus *God was manifest in Flesh.*

2. I am in the next place to consider *of whom Christ* was born; namely, of a *Virgin* the Virgin *Mary.* And therefore we are told of *Mary, Luke* II. 7. That *she brought forth her first born Son,* which is spoken of *Christ.* And that this *Mary* was a pure *Virgin,* who had never known a Man, when she brought forth this her first born Son, is evident from the Conference of the Angel with her. For we are told, *Luke* I. 17. That the Angel *Gabriel was sent to a Virgin, espoused to a Man whose Name was Joseph*; and at *v.* 31. he tells her, that *she should conceive in her Womb, and bring forth a Son, and should call His Name Jesus.* And when the holy *Virgin* was surprised at his saying, as well she might be, and replyed, *v.* 34. *How shall this be, seeing I know not a Man?* The Angel explains the Mystery to her, and lets her know, that the holy Child, which should be born of her, should not originate in the Common Way of Generation, but by a Divine Incubation, or the Almighty Power of God forming a Child in her Womb, without the natural

and

and ordinary Means therefore. v. 35. *The Angel answered, and said unto her, the Holy Ghost shall come upon thee, and the Power of the Highest shall overshadow thee, therefore also that holy Thing, which shall be born of thee, shall be called the Son of God.* Such was the miraculous and immaculate Conception of the Blessed *Jesus*!

This also the Gospel of St. *Matthew* takes notice of, and informs us, *Matt.* I. 18. That *Mary was* but *espoused to Joseph*; and that, *before they came together, she was found with Child by the Holy Ghost.* This is further confirmed by *Joseph*'s Carriage to her, upon this Affair; for he finding her to be with Child, while she was contracted to him, and before their coming together, concluded she had been guilty of Fornication (or rather Adultery, as being his espoused Wife) and therefore intended to have put her away, and have nothing further to do with her; till an Angel from God satisfyed him of her Innocency, that she was a *pure Virgin*, who had not been guilty of any criminal Conversation with any Man, but *was with Child by the Holy Ghost.* (*a*)

In all of this was but fulfilled what was anciently prædicted concerning the *Messiah*. For the very first promise of the *Messiah*, seems to imply no less, than that He should

(*a*) See *Matth.* 1. 19, 20.

be

be born of a pure *Virgin*, without any carnal Concubinage; and therefore He is called *the Seed of the Woman*, *Gen.* III. 15. Where the *Woman* only, and not *Adam*, the *Man*, is taken notice of, as from whom the *Messiah* should proceed, who should *bruise the Serpents Head.* (*b*)

But this was more plainly spoken of, by the Prophet *Isaiah*, *Ch.* VII. 14. *Behold a Virgin shall conceive and bear a Son, and shall call his Name Immanuel.* I know the latter *Jews*, and with them the Atheists and Deists of the present Age, would fain perswade us, that by *Virgin*, here is meant, *a Young Woman*, in general, whether marryed or unmarryed; and they suppose it no such mighty matter for a Young Woman, especially if marryed, to bring forth a Son; and they suppose further that the Woman intended is, the Prophets Wife, who should have another Son, and before that Son, now to be born of her, should know to refuse the Evil, and choose the Good, *Ahaz* should be delivered from the Enemies that now encamped against him.

But to make this matter plain, I need only to observe, that as it was no such great thing for a Woman to bear a Son; so a Woman, in the general, or a marryed one in particular, bringing forth a Son, would not amount to the Nature of a Sign, which is what the

(*b*) *Gen.* III. 15.

Prophet

Prophet is evidently here speaking of. And besides the learned in the Hebrew Language agree, that the Word † translated *Virgin*, properly signifies an *undefiled Virgin*, one that has not been married, nor ever known a Man; and so the *Jews*, who best knew their own Language, understood it.

But then let us consider the Design of the Prophecy, and that will greatly enlighten this matter. The evident Design of this Prophecy was to Comfort and encourage *Ahaz*, who, with *Jerusalem*, was in great Fear, that the Combination of *Resin*, King of *Syria*, and *Pekah*, King of *Israel*, now invesling *Jerusalem* with their united Forces, would carry all before them, and utterly destroy the Royal Stock, the House of *David*. *Ahaz*, obstinately (or perhaps modestly) refused to ask a Sign, as the Prophet proposed to him, and therefore the Prophet tells him, *the Lord himself shall give you a Sign* (*a*). Now a Sign ever means something out of the ordinary Course, or beyond the Power of merely natural Causes, and yet evident to our Senses; and what this Sign should be, the Prophet tells him in the next Words, *Behold, a Virgin shall conceive and bear a Son, and shall call*

† עלמה from עלם to *hide*, or *keep close*. This Word is seven times used in the Old Testament, and in all of them signifyes, an *uncorrupted Virgin*. See Dr. *Owen*, Exer. *Heb.* p. 220, 221. (*a*) *Isa.* VII. 11. 14.

His

His Name Immanuel. Tho' it be but agreeable to the Course of Nature for a Woman to conceive, and bear a Son, yet for a pure *Virgin* to do so, is beyond the Power of Second Causes; and it's being something unheard of, and exceeding the ordinary Power of Nature, is that which rendred it a Sign. Now this being but a Repetition, in other Words, and in a stronger Light, of the ancient Prophecy concerning the *Messiah*, who was to be the *Seed of the Woman*, and of the *Lineage of David*, was therefore an Assurance to *Ahaz*, and the Inhabitants of *Jerusalem*, that they should not be utterly destroyed, because the *Messiah* was yet to come; so that they had no need to be so terribly affraid of the threatned Destruction; for God will certainly remember His Word, and make good His Promise to *Abraham*, to *Isaac*, and *Jacob*, and to the House of His Servant *David*. And because this looked a great Way off, and did not seem to carry in it that Encouragement which was necessary to scatter their present Fears, the Prophet from God, further tells *Ahaz* (*a*), that *before this Child*, (meaning, and perhaps, pointing to his young Son, *Shear-jashub*, (whom God orders the Prophet to take with him (*b*), and who is no otherways concerned in this whole Affair, unless in this particular Transaction,) *before this Child shall know to refuse the Evil, and*

(*a*) v 16. (*b*) v. 3.

 choose

chooſe the Good, the Land, which thou abhorreſt, ſhall be forſaken of both her Kings. That is, *Reſin*, and *Pekah*, the *two Tails of theſe Smoaking Fire-brands*, (as they are called (*c*) ſhould both of them be withdrawn from diſtreſſing *Jeruſalem*, and be ſpeedily cut off; as it came to paſs within a little while after: for *Pekah* was cut off by *Hoſhea*, (*d*), and *Reſin* by the King of *Aſſyria* (*e*); by which means *Ahaz* and *Judah*, were wholly delivered from the Deſolation threatned by theſe two combined Adverſarys.

So that the Sign, which the Lord gave *Ahaz* by His Prophet, concerning *a Virgin's conceiving, and bearing a Son*, was but a further Ratification of what God had promiſed to His People of old, and therefore an Aſſurance to *Ahaz*, that the Houſe of *David*, and *Judah* ſhould not be deſtroyed, becauſe His Promiſe yet remained to be made Good to them; which make the Words to be a clear Prædiction, of the *Meſſiah's* being born of a *Virgin*; and it was punctually fulfilled in His Birth of the Bleſſed *Virgin Mary*.

3. The third thing I am to conſider, relating to the Birth of Chriſt, is the *Place* of it. And it is ſaid, in my Text, to be *in the City of David*, that is, *Bethlehem*, as the Evangeliſt tells us, at *v.* 4. *Bethlehem* was called, the *City of David*, becauſe he was born there,

(*c*) *v.* 4. (*d*) II. *Kin.* xv. 30. (*e*) II. *Kin.* xvi. 9.

and

and there his Family had their chief Seat (*a*). And we read, *Mich* V. 2. *But thou, Bethlehem Ephrata, tho' thou be little,* (or shall be Chief) *among the Thousands of Judah; yet out of Thee, shall He come forth unto me, that is to be Ruler in Israel.* This the Jews ever understood to be a Prophecy, that the *Messiah* should be born in *Bethlehem*; and therefore when *Herod* enquired of the chief Priests and Scribes, where *Christ* should be born, they tell him, in *Bethlehem* in *Judea*, and refer to this very Text, in *Micah*, for the Proof of it (*b*). †

To bring about the Fulfilment of this Prophecy, the Roman Emperor, *Augustus*, about the Twenty fourth Year of his Reign, orders a general Survey to be made of the whole Roman Empire, which Survey extended to the Provinces dependant upon the Empire, as well as the Citizens of *Rome*; by which Enrollment, every one was obliged to repair, to *their own City*, as the Evangelist *Luke* informs us, (*c*); that is, the City where their Ancestors had their Original, there to have

(*a*) I. *Sam.* XVI. 1. and XVII 12. + Dr. *Prid.* con. vol. IV p. 781. (*b*) *Matt.* II 4, 5. 6.

† The putting to Death all the Children that were in *Bethlehem*, is a sad Testimony, which proves, that we did not invent the Answer which the Scribes and Pharisees returned unto *Herod*; and that Answer likewise, is a certain Evidence, that the *Jews* themselves were formerly of Opinion that this Oracle concerned the *Messiah* only. *Abbadie* Vin. p. 502 (*c*) to *Luke* II. 3.

their Names, Qualities and Poſſeſſions, entered upon Record ‖; this neceſſitated *Joſeph* and *Mary* his eſpouſed Wife, ſome Years after, when the Survey was come into the Province of *Judea*, to travel from Nazareth, where they dwelt, to *Bethlehem*, as to their own City, from whence they derived, there to have their Names and Circumſtances enrolled; and while they were, upon this Occaſion, in *Bethlehem*, the *Virgin Mary*, was delivered of her firſt born Son. And thus *Chriſt* was born in *the City of David*,

Now beſides a literal Accompliſhment of the Prophecy of *Micah*, concerning the Place of the *Meſſiah's* Nativity, here was alſo a plain Proof, of His being of the Royal Stock, of *David*, and ſo *King of the Jews*. For the Promiſe of the *Meſſiah*, that was to come into the World, was firſtly confined to the Loyns of *Abraham*, afterwards to the Tribe of *Judah*, and laſtly to the Family of *David*, and accordingly the Survey that led *Joſeph* and *Mary* to *Bethlehem*, the *City of David*, proves them both to be of the Line of *David*, and deſcended from his Stock. Therefore the Evangeliſts, in drawing down the Line of Deſcent, deſignedly ſhew us, how *Chriſt* was the Son of *David*. *Matthew* (a) gives us the Line from *David* to *Joſeph*, His ſuppoſed Father;

‖ Dr. *Prid.* con. vol. IV. p. 919.
(a) *Matt.* ch. 1.

and

and *Luke* (b) the Line of His real Mother; which ſhews they were both deſcended from that renowned King of *Iſrael*. For *Heli*, in Luke's Catalogue, was the Father ‖ of *Mary*, who was eſpouſed to *Joſeph*; and becauſe the *Jews* made no reckoning, in their Genealogies, by the Mother's ſide, therefore *Joſeph* her eſpouſed Husband, and Son in Law to *Heli*, is mentioned in her Room †.

Thus much may ſuffice to have ſpoken to the *Birth of Chriſt*, the Certainty of it, the Perſon of whom, and the Place where. I ſhall now proceed to the Second thing I propoſed, namely,

II. To conſider the *Time* of our Bleſſed Lord's Nativity, or when *Chriſt* was born. And this I ſhall do, firſt more generally, and then more particularly.

I. I ſhall conſider the *Time* of *Chriſt*'s Birth more *Generally*. And there are eſpecially Two Prophecies, which I ſhall take Notice

(b) *Luke* ch. III. ‖ *Clark's Annot.*

† 'Tis obſervable, that St. *Luke*, in drawing the Line of Deſcent, does not ſay, *'twas He the Son of Heli*, but only mentions the ſeveral Fathers ſucceſſively, and as we put, [*as was ſuppoſed*] into a Parentheſis, in our Tranſlation, let us enlarge the Parentheſis to, [*as was ſuppoſed the Son of Joſeph*] and the Catalogue runs clear; *Jeſus began to be about 30 Years of Age, being (as was ſuppoſed the Son of Joſeph, but was indeed the Son) of Heli, of Matthat* &c. And He was of *Heli*, by his Daughter *Mary*, as the *Jews* well know, and therefore ſay of him, *Is not this the Carpenter, the Son of Mary?* *Mark* VI. 3. and 400 Years after the *Jews* acknowledge this in their *Jeruſalem Targum*, as Dr. *Lightf.* obſerves in his Hor. *Heb.* in *Luk.* III. 23.

of,

of, as pointing to the Time of the *Meſſiah*'s appearing in the World, both of which have had their full Accompliſhment in the Coming of Chriſt.

The *Firſt* I ſhall mention is the famous Prophecy in *Jacob*'s Bleſſing his Son *Judah*, which is contained in *Gen.* XLIX. 10. *The Scepter ſhall not depart from Judah, nor a Lawgiver from between his Feet, until Shiloh come.* By *Shiloh* is meant the *Meſſiah*, as the *Jews* themſelves before our Saviour's Time ever acknowledged.* The Deſign of the Prophecy is a general Aſſurance that the Sovereign Power ſhall remain in the Tribe of *Judah*, unto the Time of *Shiloh*, or *Chriſt*, His appearing in the World, after which all Sovereign Power ſhould be loſt from among the *Jewiſh* Nation. And this has been very punctually fulfilled.

For it is very evident, that this foreign Power continued in the Tribe of *Judah*, in a Line of Kings that deſcended from *David*, from his Time, down to the *Babyloniſh* Captivity; and in the Time of that Captivity, tho' their State was exceedingly broken, yet were they governed, in *part*, by Rulers of their own ſet over them, in the Land of *Judea*, and *chiefly*, by their own Laws, and

* All the three Targums, *Onkelos* written before Chriſt's Time, and *Jonathan*'s and the *Jeruſalem*, written after it, agree in applying this to the *Meſſiah*. Dr. *Owen* Exer. *Heb.* p. 97.

their

their own *Sanhedrim*, or Council, which still preserved something of the Sovereign Power, even in their Dispersions among the *Babylonians*; till at length the *Persian* Emperour fully restored the Sovereign Power to them. And thro' all the Disturbances which they afterwards met with, from the *Syrian*, and *Egyptian* Princes, yet still they had some of the Sovereignty among them, even to the Birth of *Christ*. For at that Time, *Herod* who, we are told †, descended from a Family of the *Jews*, was King over them; however they were governed chiefly by their own Laws, and had the *Power of Life and Death*, which is the highest Act of Sovereignty, to be found among them. But, from the Time of *Christ's* appearing, that Sovereign Power was wholly lost; and never more recovered by them. For *Herod*, we are told *, reigned one Year after *Christ's* Birth, and *Archelaus*, who succeeded him, reigned Ten Years, and the very next Year, which was the Twelfth of our Lord's Nativity, and the Year He first appeared in the Temple, manifesting something of His Glory, in Disputing with the Doctors there, the *Romans*, having seized *Judea*, by the Hands of *Pub. Sul. Quirinius*, whom *Luke*

† Dr. *Prid.* con. vol. IV. p. 935.

* Dr. *Prid.* ubi. ibid. Tho' I rather choose to suppose with Mr. *Whiston* in his *Chron.* that *Herod* lived but little more than a Month after *Christ's* Nativity. See the *Appendix*.

calls

calls *Cyrenius*, annexed it to their Empire, and placed a *Roman* Governour over it, and subjected it to the *Roman* Laws. From this Time, the *Sceptre departed from Judah* and *Lawgiver from between His Feet*; and this was more plainly evident, when, not many Years after, the *Roman* Army, under *Titus*, destroyed their City, and Nation, since which Time they have had no Pretensions to Sovereign Power.

This therefore proves, that the *Messiah*, the promised *Shiloh*, was then come, and that He came about the Time when *Jesus Christ* first appeared in the World, and whatever the latter *Jews* pretend, yet the former readily confessed they had lost their Sovereignty, when they said, *Joh.* XVIII. 31. *It is not lawful for us to put any Man to Death*; and when they replied to *Pilate*, the *Roman* Governour, (who brought forth *Jesus* to them, a little before His Crucifixion, and said, Behold your King,) *we have no King but Cæsar*, *Joh.* XIX. 15.

Secondly. The other Prophecy, I would take notice of, relating to the Time of the Birth of the *Messiah*, is that remarkable one of the Prophet *Daniel*, (a), *Seventy Weeks are determined upon thy People, and upon thy holy City,* —— *know therefore, and understand, that from the going forth of the Commandment, to restore*

(a) *Dan.* IX. 24. —— 27.

and

and to build Jerusalem, unto the Messiah the Prince shall be seven Weeks, and three-score and two Weeks; (the Street shall be built again, and the Wall, even in troublous Times:) and after three-score and two Weeks shall Messiah be cut off.— He shall confirm the Covenant with many for one Week; and in the latter half of the Week He shall cause the Sacrifice and Oblation to cease.— The *Seventy Weeks* are allowed by all to mean *Weeks of Years*, according to the Prophetick Style, that is, 490 Years. These *Seventy Weeks* are divided into *Three Periods*, namely *Seven Weeks*, or 49 Years, to *restore and to build Jerusalem*, *Sixty two Weeks*, or 434 Years, from thence to the *appearing of the Messiah the Prince.* And *one Week*, or seven Years from thence, for the confirming of the Covenant; which last Week seems to have a Sub-division belonging to it, by the Expression, *in the Dividing*, or in the *latter Part of the Week, the Messiah the Prince shall be cut off, and finish Transgression, and make an End of Sin*; or put an End to all other Sacrifices for Sin by the Sacrifice of Himself.

The main Difficulty here is, to understand, what Decree, or Commandment is intended by the Prophecy, that we may know, from whence to Date the 70 *Weeks*, or 490 Years: For there were several Decrees issued out, in Favour of the *Jews*, by the *Persian* Emperours.

The *firſt* was in the Firſt Year of *Cyrus*, of which we read, *Ezra*, I. *begin*: But this could not be the Commandment ſpoken of by *Daniel*, which was to *reſtore and to build Jeruſalem*; becauſe this Decree had its ſpecial Reference to the Building of the *Temple*, and had no particular Regard to *Jeruſalem*, nor was any further concerned about it, than as the rebuilding the Temple neceſſarily required their Inhabiting in ſome Place near to it, and no doubt but *Cyrus* was influenced to make this Decree, for the *Jews* to return and rebuild their Temple, in Honour to that God, who had, according to his ancient Prophecies concerning him, raiſed him to his Grandeure, and ſo long before hand prædicted his Birth, Name, and Reign (*a*); and therefore he præfaces his Decree, with this, as the Reaſon of it, *The Lord God of Heaven hath given me all the Kingdoms of the Earth, and he hath charged me to build Him an Houſe in Jeruſalem, which is in Judah* (*b*).

There was a *Second* Decree iſſued out from the *Perſian* Court, about 18 Years after the former, by *Darius*, the Son of *Hiſtaſpis*, which came to the *Jews*, at *Jeruſalem*, about the beginning of his fourth Year †; of which we have an Account, *Ezra*, VI. 6. — But neither does this ſeem to be the Commandment

(*a*) *Iſa.* XLIV. 28. (*b*) *Ezra*, I. 2. † Dr. *Prid.* con. vol. I. p. 259.

ſpoken

ſpoken of by *Daniel*: for this was chiefly a Recital and Confirmation of the former Decree made by *Cyrus*, and, as we may ſee in the Body of the Decree, was confined to the Building the Temple, and the Service thereof, only with this Addition, that the *Samaritans*, who endeavoured all they could to obſtruct the Building of the Temple, were now obliged to pay the King's Tribute to the *Jews*, to help bear the Charge of the Work.

But then, there was a *Third* Decree in Favour of the *Jews*, made in the *Seventh* Year of *Artaxerxes Longimanus*, who is the *Ahaſuerus* ſpoken of in the Book of *Eſther*; and doubtleſs it was by the Perſwaſion of his beloved *Eſther*, whom the King had taken to Wife in the Seventh Year of his Reign (*c*) after the putting away of *Vaſhti* from being Queen, that the King was moved to make ſuch an ample Decree in Favour of the *Jews*. For this Decree granted firſt to *Ezra* (*d*) and afterwards renewed, in the *Twentieth* Year of his Reign, to *Nehemiah* (*e*), was a full and ample reſtoring the *Jews* to all their Priviledges and Powers; for it not only eſtabliſhed, and provided for the Service of the Temple, but devolved the full Power of the

(*c*) *Eſt.* II. 16. Probably the King had before this received her, in her turn, with the other Virgins, and ſhe gained his Love, tho' it was the Seventh Year before he ſet the royal Crown upon her Head

(*d*) *Ezra.* VII. (*e*) *Neh.* II. *init.*

Civil Government, and the inflicting any Puniſhment, pecuniary, or Corporal, even to Baniſhment & Death, upon their own Ruler (*f*) and ſo was a *reſtoring and building Jeruſalem*, in the fulleſt Senſe of the Words, namely, a Compleat Eſtabliſhment of their Church and State.

This Decree then, it is moſt likely, from the Tenure of it, was that intended by the Prophet *Daniel*, when he ſays, *from the going forth of the Commandment, to reſtore and build Jeruſalem*, &c. And from hence we are to begin the Computation of the 70 Weeks, or 490 Years † and that we may be able to diſcern the exact Accompliſhment of the Prophecy, we muſt obſerve;

That the Decree was made in the *Seventh* Year of *Artaxerxes Longimanus*.

That the Decree began to take Effect on the *firſt* Day of the *Jewiſh* Month *Niſan*, which was their firſt Eccleſiaſtical Month, and anſwers to the Middle of our *March*; for upon that Day, *Ezra* ſets out from *Babylon*, to go up to *Jeruſalem*, with his large Commiſſion from the King (*a*); and it is very probable that the Commiſſion had been given him, but a few Days before, and that *Ezra*, who was greatly in the King's Favour, and was well appriſed of the Grant he was about to receive, had diligently imployed himſelf, in ordering

(*f*) *Ezr.* VII. 11, 26. † See Dr. *Owen*, Exer. Heb. p. 193, 194. (*a*) *Ezra.* VII. 9.

Matters

Matters for this Journey, while the Commission was making out for him.

The *Seventh* Year of *Artaxerxes* answered to the 4256, Year of the *Julian Period*.

Now the first *Seven Weeks* of Years, or 49 Years of *Daniel's* Prophecy, commencing in the *Seventh* Year of *Artaxerxes*, were all of them spent in *restoring and building Jerusalem*; that is, in the resettling the Church and State of the *Jews*, first under the Government of *Ezra*, and then under *Nehemiah*, who succeeded him, and compleated that Settlement, in that last Act of his Reformation, recorded, *Neh.* XIII. 23. —— which seems to have been the last Article recorded in the Old Testament; and falls in with A. I. P. 4305. †

The Second Branch of the Prophecy, *viz.* 62 *Weeks*, or 434 Years, from thence to *Messiah the Prince*, appearing to *confirm the Covenant*, had also its exact Accomplishment; for just so many Years intervened, between that last Act of *Nehemiah's* Reformation, and the first Appearance of *John Baptist*, the Forerunner of our Lord, *preaching Repentance, for the Kingdom of Heaven is at Hand.* For *John* began his Ministry in the Fifteenth ‖ of *Tiberius* (*a*), which answered to the *Julian Per.* 4739. exactly 434 Years.

† See Dr. *Prid.* Con. part. I Book VI. p. 609.

(*a*) *Luke* III. 1. 2, 3. ‖ That is of *Tiberius's* reigning in Copartnership with *Augustus*. *Prid.* v. IV p. 940.

The

The *laſt* Branch of the Prophecy, *One Week*, or 7 Years, was for the *Confirming of the Covenant*, to the *Cutting off of the Meſſiah*. And accordingly we find our Lords Forerunner entring upon his Office in the 15th Year of *Tiberius*, as we have ſaid, and ſpending ſome Time, (as is generally tho't,) Three Years and an Half in Confirming the Covenant, and then our Lord Himſelf publickly entred upon His Office, and ſpent three Years and an Half more, in the ſame Work, which compleated the *Week* of Years, or *Seven* Years, at the End of which He was *cut off*, and by his Death, which was, *not for Himſelf*, but, a Sacrifice for our Sin, He *finiſhed Tranſgreſſion, and made an End of Sin, and cauſed the Sacrifice and Oblation to ceaſe.*

Now the Death of Chriſt fell in the 19 of *Tiberius*'s Reign, or his 22. from his being admitted into Partnerſhip with *Auguſtus*, and this was in the 4746 Year of the *Julian Period*, exactly 490 Years, or *Seventy* Prophetick Weeks, from the going forth of the Commandment, in the 7th Year of *Artaxexes Longimanus*. Our Bleſſed Lord upon the Croſs died, at the Time of the Feaſt of the *Jewiſh* Paſſover, which was about the Middle of their Month *Niſan*, and *Ezra* ſet out from *Babylon*, with his Commiſſion, the firſt Day of the Month *Niſan*, ſo that from thence to the Death of *Chriſt* was 490 Years to a Month.

Now

Now deducting the Time of our Lord's Life, (which Dr. *Prideaux* supposed to be 36 Years and an Half) from the Time of his Death, and it gives us His Birth in the Year 4709. in the 33d of *Herod*, about 4 Years after he had prepared the Temple, by re-edifying and adorning it, for the Reception of the great Saviour, whose Presence there made it greatly to excel the Glory of the First House; and in the 26th Year of the Reign of *Augustus*. †

All of which are made plain by the Labours of that great Man Dr. *Prideaux*.

Having thus considered the Time of our Saviour's Birth, in the General, I pass

2. To a more *Particular* Consideration of it. And here it may be enquired.

1. What *Month*, and *Day* it was, on which *Christ* was born? And

2. Whether that Day ought to be *kept in Memorial* of His Birth? I would offer something to each of these briefly.

I. What *Month*, & *Day*, was it, in which our Blessed Saviour, *Jesus Christ*, was born? The Angel says, in my Text, *This Day is born unto you, a Saviour*; and doubtless, it was the very individual Day on which Christ was born, that he said so. But what particular Day of the Month was that? And in Answer to this Enquiry, it must be affirmed, that, so far as we are yet acquainted

† See further in the Appendix, this Account corrected

with

with the Hiſtory of thoſe diſtant Times, no Man can certainly tell, on what Day His Birth was. This I think is confeſſed by all that have laboured moſt in the Search after it. But then tho' the individual *Day* cannot be particularly and poſitively determined, yet we may come pretty near the Time, and be able to diſcover the *Month* of our Saviour's Nativity, by obſerving ſome things, which lye plain before us. As

Firſt, We may obſerve what St. *Luke* tells us, *Luke* II. 8. *There were in the ſame Country*, (viz. *Bethlehem*) *Shepherds, abiding in the Field, and keeping watch over their Flocks by Night.* Now it is well known, that *Judea* is a cold Country, in the Winter Seaſon *, and the

* When *Herod* in his War with *Antigonus*, had ſlain *Pappus* his General and cut off moſt of the Army, and might by marching directly to *Jeruſalem*, have maſtered it, and put an intire End to the War. Dr *Prid.* tells us, he was forced to neglect the Opportunity becauſe of *the Severity of the Winter, which now approached, the Souldiers not being able to bear lying any longer abroad.* con. vol. IV. p. 738.

And when moſt of the Flocks in *Judea* were conſumed with the Drought, in the 13th Year of *Herod*, the *Dr.* mentions it as a great Act of charity in him to take care to bring Wool eno' into the Land to provide Cloathing for the Inhabitants againſt Winter, to defend them from *all the Severities of it.* con. *vol.* IV p. 852.

And Mr. *Whiſton* remarks, that this Time of the Year (*Dec.* 25.) was unfit for the travelling of the *Jews* to the Enrollment, for the Shepherds watching their Flocks by Night, as well as for the Lying-Inn of the bleſſed Virgin in a Stable. *Hiſt.* p. 164. and St. *John*, tells us, the day *Chriſt* ſuffered. (*Apr.* 3d,) the *Servants made a Fire, for it was cold. Joh.* XVIII. 18. How much more then on *Dec.* 25.

Froſt

Frost and Snow not a great deal short of what they are sometimes, among us: And therefore the dead of Winter can by no means be thought a proper Season, for the Shepherds to be abroad, in the Field, watching their Flocks by Night. So that it looks very unlikely, from this Circumstance that the Nativity of *Christ* should be in the Depth of the Winter.

But then, *Secondly*, we know that our Lord entred upon His Publick Ministry, at, or about, the compleating of his *Thirtieth* Year, which the Evangelist *Luke* takes particular Notice of, *Luke* III. 23. *Jesus himself began to be about*, ὡσεὶ *Tetrakonta*, that is, it was about the compleating of His 30th Year. This refers to the Time of His Baptism, and entrance upon His Publick Ministry; for in His return from *Jordan*, He was led by the Spirit into the Wilderness, and having there mastered the Temptations of the Devil, *from that Time Jesus began to preach, and to say, Repent, for the Kingdom of God is at Hand*, as we read *Matt.* IV. 17.

Now it is generally supposed that *Christ* continued His Publick Ministry, for the space of *Three Years and an Half*, †, and then suffered and Dyed. For *John Baptist*, preached three Years and an half, as the Forerunner of our Lord, and then Christ himself Three and an half more, which makes the last *Week*, or

† Dr. Prid. Vol. IV. p. 94.

Seven Years, ſpoken of by *Daniel*, for the *confirming the Covenant*. So that there was evidently an odd *Half* Year in the life of *Chriſt*. And it is very plain, that He was crucified at the Time of the *Jews* Paſſover, as appears from *Joh.* XVIII. 39. and XIX. 14. which was upon the 13th Day of the Month *Niſan*, that is about the laſt of our *March*, or beginning of our *April*. Deduct half a Year from this, and it carrys back the Birth of *Chriſt* to the *Jews* Month *Tiſri*, about the Feaſt of Tabernacles, which anſwers to the latter end of our *September*, or beginning of *October*; at which Time, it may well and be ſuppoſed, the Shepherds might lye out in the Field, watching their Flocks by Night. So that tho' we cannot find the very individual *Day* of *Chriſt's* Nativity, yet it can be proved, almoſt to a Demonſtration, that He was born in or near to *Tiſri*, ſometime in *September* or *October*, about the Time of the Creation of the World, and about the Four Thouſandth Year from the Creation. But I am to enquire,

2. Whether the Day of *Chriſt's* Nativity ought to be kept, in Memorial of His Birth? You all know, that a great Part of the Chriſtian Church obſerve This very Day, the *Twenty Fifth of December*, in Remembrance of the Day of the Nativity of our Lord. But

† Mr. *Whiſton* fixes it to the 2d of *July Ant.* N. 103.

whether there be any Obligation lying upon us, as Christians, to keep such a Day, will be seen by observing a few things.

First, It is to be observed, that no Church can keep the *true Day*, on which *Christ* was born: Because it is not known to the World, as I have already remarked. And it looks something odd, to select a Day, and keep it, in Memorial of *Christ*'s being born on *that* Day; when, at the same Time, they know it was not the Day of His Nativity. And, by the Way, because the Day is not known in the World, this is a very cogent Proof, that there was no such Custom in the primitive Church as the keeping the Birth Day of *Christ*. For if there had been any such Practice in Use in the first Ages of the Church, doubtless they would have known the Particular *Month* better, if not the individual *Day*; because they lived so near, to the Time of it, that it would have been no great Difficulty, to have informed themselves thorowly, if they had had any particular Regard to *that Day*, above all the Days in the Year.

This Usage was firstly introduced by the *Roman* Church. For when *Rome* became *Christian*, perhaps a Willingness to oblige the *Pagans*, as much as might be, moved them to take *their Festival Days*, which they were so mightily fond of, and convert them to a *Christian Use*; hoping, by this Means, the

easier to gain the remaining *Pagans*, to embrace the *Christian Institution*; and the *Saturnalia* of *Pagan Rome*, being celebrated in the Month of *December*, †, which was one of the most remarkable Times of Revelling among them, therefore the Church of *Rome*, being ignorant of the true Time of the Nativity of *Christ*, converted that Feast and Revelling to the Celebration of the Birth of the Saviour *. And I wish it were not generally observed too much after the old *Pagan* manner, in Re-

velling

† Lucr. Dies.

* Mr. *Whiston*, after a Fruitless Search for any good Reason, why the Birth of *Christ* is commemorated upon the 25th of *December*, tells us, *here, upon this, is an uncommon Observation of a very great Man, (viz.)* 'Thus the Christian Holy Days, or solemn Commemorations of our Saviour and His Apostles ——— seem to have been first fixed by the Christian Churches not on the Days of their Birth or Death, of which generally they were wholly Ignorant, but on the Sun's Entrance into Signs, especially those that were the Equinox and Solstice Days, and on such Days as were noted among the Heathen, and were Days of Riot and Idolatry; that to those pernicious Solemnities of the Heathen Worship, and Remains of the Heathen Superstition might, by Degrees, be supplanted and worn off, by the holy and Spiritual Solemnities of the Christian Religion. Thus because the Sun's ingress into Signs, in our Saviour's Time, generally happened on the 24th or 25th Days of each Month, we have upon Nine or Ten of our Months a Christian Holy-Day on one of those Days, even tho' there be commonly scarce another in the whole Month. Thus St. *Philip* and St. *James* are commemorated *May* 1, because the *Floralia*, a heathen and Idolatrous Solemnity was on the same Day before. And thus to wear out the Thoughts of the Heathen *Saturnalia*, ——— the primitive Church tho't fit to observe the Annual Memorial of our Saviour's Birth about the same Time. *Whist.* View of Har. p 162 163.

velling and Debauchery. The Observation of which alone, one would think, should make a considerate Person very cautious, how he embraced a Custom that is so vilely abused, when there is no plain Institution for it. For,

Secondly, It is to be observed, that there is no Divine Command for the keeping such a Day. If the Particular Day were known, which it is not, yet it is plain, there is no Injunction from *Christ*, or His *Apostles*, to observe it; and much less to observe any other Day in Commemoration of it. The Weekly Sabbath has a Divine Sanction for it, as a Day sacred to the Duties of Religious Worship, (*a*), and as a Memorial of the *Resurrection of Christ* from the Dead (*b*,) by which the great Work of Redemption, and End of *Christ's* Incarnation, was accomplished. But no one that I know of, pretends to any Divine Command for the keeping of *Christmass*, or a Day in Commemoration of the Birth of *Christ*. And then,

Thirdly, It very much looks, as if God never intended there should be any such Day observed; not only in that, He has not commanded it, but in that, He has kept the Day *Hid* and *Secret* from the World. For had it seemed meet to the Divine Wisdom, that such a Day should have been kept, in after Genera-

(*a*) *Exod.* XX. 8, 9, 10. (*b*) *Matt.* XXVIII. 1. compare with *Joh.* XX 19, 26. and *Act.* XX. 7. and *Rev.* I. 10.

tions,

tions, in Commemoration of the Birth of *Chriſt*, as a means to promote our Faith, and Holineſs, doubtleſs there would, at leaſt, have been left ſome very plain Footſteps, of that remarkable Day, if not ſome general Intimation of the Obſervation of it. For otherwiſe, the hiding it from the World, would be a deſigned keeping hid from us, one very proper means to promote our Faith and Holineſs, which is far from being conſiſtent with the Divine Goodneſs, under the full and clear Light of the Goſpel. But tho' the Birth of the great Saviour was ſo remarkable a Time, from the miraculous Appearance of a Light, or Star, over *Bethlehem*; the mighty Stir, which the Tidings of the Birth of *the King of the Jews*, which ſoon reached *Jeruſalem*, occaſioned among the *Jews*; and from *Herod*'s having his Fears ſo much awakened, by the Report, as to ſlay all the Male-Children in *Bethlehem* under two Years old; and from the wiſe Men of the Eaſt, who had ſeen His Star, in the Eaſt, travelling a long Journey to *Jeruſalem*, and from thence to *Bethlehem*, to Worſhip the Child; yet, notwithſtanding all theſe remarkable Occurrents, the Day of *Chriſt* Nativity was not ſo much taken Notice of, as to be left upon any certain Record. Nay it was 527. Years after the Birth of *Chriſt*, before the *Chriſtian Æra* was brought into Uſe, by *Dioniſius Exiguus*, a Roman Abbot.

†: (which

(which is a strong Præsumption, if not full Evidence, there was no keeping of *Christ-mass* before that Time) all of which seems fairly to point to us, that God, in His Wise Providence, has, in a most wonderful manner, hidden so Remarkable a Day, which one would have tho't could not have been lost, for this very Purpose, that the Christian World might have no just Foundation to go upon, in any Superstitious Regards to that Day; as He was pleased to hide the Body of *Moses*, the great Lawgiver of the *Jews*, that they could never tell where it was buryed, to prevent their running into Superstition about it.

Upon all which, I cannot see the least Room to suppose, that there is any Obligation lying upon Christians, to observe any Day, in Commemoration of the Birth of *Christ*, much less the Day that is kept as such.

But I pass to the Third, and last, thing I propos'd to speak to, from these Words, in which I shall use all convenient Brevity: *viz.*

III. To consider of the great *End and Design* of the Birth and Incarnation of *Jesus Christ*. This is plainly pointed at in my Text; *unto you is born a Saviour, Christ the Lord.* So that the main End of His Birth was, to Be a SAVIOUR unto the World. Therefore it is that, *That Word*, which, the Apostle tells us, was in the Beginning, and was

† Dr. *Prid.* Præf. to Con. p. 3.

with

with God, and was God, *was made Flesh, and dwelt among us* (a); that is, became Incarnate, and was born of a Woman, without which He could not have been a *Saviour* to us. For tho' he might have Taught, and Governed us, without taking our Flesh upon Him, yet He could not have had a Body, to offer as a Sacrifice for us, if He had not taken our Nature upon Him; and without This there could have been no Salvation.

To this the ancient Types and Predictions concerning Him looked, and this He Himself assures us of, when He says, *God sent not His Son into the World to condemn the World, but that the World, by Him, might be saved.*

The *Jews* ever expected the promised *Messiah* would be a *Saviour*. But then *Jesus Christ* was not born into the World, to be such a *Saviour* as they imagined and looked for, only a *Temporal Saviour*, to deliver the Nation from all their Enemies, and erect a Temporal Kingdom, in greater Pomp, and Grandeure than had ever yet been seen among them. No; He was born to be a *Spiritual Saviour*, which is by far the Greater; He became Incarnate to save his People from Sin, and Death, from Guilt, and the Wrath and Curse of God, which that Guilt had exposed them to. And

(a) *Joh.* I. 14.

accordingly

accordingly the Evangelist *Matthew* informs us, *Matt.* I. 21. *He came to save his People from their Sins, and therefore is His Name called Jesus.* And the Apostle, in his Epistle to the *Galations*, acquaints us, what was the End of *Christ*'s Incarnation, when he says, *Gal.* IV. 4, 5. *When the fullness of Time was come, God sent forth His Son, made of a Woman, made under the Law, to redeem them that were under the Law, that we might receive the Adoption of Sons. Jesus Christ* became Incarnate, to recover us from the Power and Dominion of Sin, and the Devil over us, and the Sentence of Condemnation that was out against us, and to restore us to the Favour and Friendship of God, and a Life of Obedience to Him; to entitle us to the Dignity and Priviledges of the Children of God, and to regain that Heaven and Happiness for us which we had lost.

Thus he was born a *Saviour*; and that not to the *Jewish* Nation only, but to the *Gentile* World, even to all Nations of Men, who have the Grace of God appearing to them in the Gospel of *Jesus Christ* our Lord; for He is given to be *a Light to lighten the Gentiles, as well as the Glory of His People Israel* (a): And therefore *we Gentiles* walk in the Light of the glorious Gospel, and have the Offers of

(a) *Luke* II. 32.

Chriſt a *Saviour* made to us. Thus unto *us* there is born a *Saviour*.

And the two Names by which He is here deſcribed declare him to be ſo. He is CHRIST, this is His Name, and peculiarly His. He went by the Name of *Meſſiah*, under the old Teſtament Diſpenſation, which converted into *Greek*, is CHRISTOS, being of the ſame meaning with the Hebrew Word MESHIAC, *the anointed*. For Him hath God the Father anointed and conſecrated to the high Office of a *Saviour*, having conſtituted and ſeperated Him (*b*), to this very Work; that by His Life and Doctrine He might teach and inſtruct the World of Mankind, and ſo reſcue it from the Power and Tyranny of the Fleſh, the World, and the Devil; and that as our high Prieſt He might make Attonement for us and reconcile us to God by His Blood, which He hath offered, as a Sacrifice well pleaſing and acceptable, to His eternal Father. This ſhews Him to be an *authentic Saviour*, and gives Validity to His Actions, in that He was anointed and conſecrated to this very End and Purpoſe; and *did not take this Honour to Himſelf, but was called of God, as was Aaron*, Heb. V. 4.

And He is LORD, as well as CHRIST; this is His particular Style thro'out the New-Teſtament; which ſhews him to be an *able*

(*b*) *Joh.* X. 36. and VI. 27. and *Act.* X. 38.

Saviour

Saviour (c) every Way equal to the Work He had undertaken, and that He has fully accomplished it. He is *Christ the Lord*, as denoting His Supremacy and Dominion over all things; the Style LORD, being appropriated to Him in the New-Testament, as JEHOVAH is the True GOD, in the Old, and as bearing some Analogy with it, in the Design of it, which is to shew us, that He is GOD, as well as MAN, and therefore has all Power in Heaven and Earth: And in an especial Manner, He is *Lord over His Church* (a), having the sole Power and Authority, to Rule it, to enact Laws, and change it's Laws and Customs, as He pleases; to abolish the old *Mosaic* Pædagogy, and institute the *Christian* Œconomy in the Room of it; that He only has Right to give Law unto his Church, and His Laws only are to be observed, and not the Tradition & Inventions of Men, in the Worship of GOD. As *Lord*, He subdues all our Spiritual Enemies (b), gives to us Repentance and Remission of Sins (c), makes us victorious over the Flesh, the World and the Devil (d), and conducts His Followers safe to the Glory and Happiness of the Heavenly World (e). As *Lord*, He has the Keys of the Invisible World in His Keeping (f), and will open the Gates of the Grave, and fetch up the Prisoners

(c) *Heb.* VII 25. (a) *Col.* I. 18. (b) *Col* II. 15.
(c) *Act.* V. 31. (d) *Rom.* VIII. 37. (e) *Joh.* XIV. 3.
(f) *Rev.* I. 18.

from the Bars of the Pitt (*g*), enliven and animate them anew with their Glorified Souls, and preſent them Immortal Bodies (*h*), before His Father, to inhabit the Heavenly Regions (*i*), and dwell with Him forever in Glory (*k*).

This was the great End of His Incarnation and Birth, thus to be a SAVIOUR, and therefore is He LORD and CHRIST.

There are ſome other things conſiderable in my Text; but I may not proceed any further at this Time. Let the Uſe of what has been ſaid, be,

USE I. To teach us, to adore the Faithfulneſs of God, and be encouraged to Believe, and Truſt in His Word.

Let us adore the Faithfulneſs of God, in Fulfilling the Word He has ſpoken, in the exact Accompliſhment of ſo many of His ancient Prophecies, as we have ſeen, and particularly that great one; on which the whole Welfare of Mankind depended, His ſending the *Meſſiah*, a SAVIOUR, into the World. And ſince we ſee, that God has ſo punctually made Good His Word, in ſo many Inſtances, let us learn, never to Disbelieve, or Diſtruſt the Word of God, but live in the full Expectation of the exact Accompliſhment of ſuch of the Prophecies, as yet remain to be fulfilled.

Let us learn hence, to Live in a quiet Dependance upon the Word of Promiſe, which

(*g*) *Job* VI. 40. (*h*) I. *Cor.* XV. 53. (*i*) II. *Cor.* V. 1.
(*k*) I. *Theſ.* IV. 17.

God

God has made unto His People, for tho' their Circumstances should be ever so difficult, and the greatest Darkness should surround them, so that they can see no possible Way left for their Escape, yet God is True, and in His own Time, and Way, can, and will, appear for their Help, and grant Deliverance to them out of all their Troubles.

And especially should we learn hence, to Trust God with the Fulfillment of His Promises to us, relating to our future State, even the Hope of Eternal Life, which God, that cannot lye, has promised, before the World began, upon our Faith and Obedience to His Son; and be encouraged thereby to a constant unwearied Abounding in all the Duties of the Christian Life, as knowing, we shall certainly reap, if we faint not; for *Faithfull is He that has promised*, and will perform it (a).

II. Hence, since the Son of God is become Incarnate, let this serve to teach us our Duty, and our Comfort.

Our *Duty*; that we be exceeding careful, not to debase that Nature, which the eternal Son of God has taken into an Union to Himself. That therefore, we do not allow ourselves in any Sin whatever, but cleanse ourselves from all Filthiness of Flesh and Spirit, and perfect Holiness in the Fear of God; because all Sin is a debasing of the Humane Nature, and brings a Stain and Blemish upon it,

(a) *Heb.* X 23.

and

and is therefore to caſt Indignity upon the Son of God Himſelf, who has highly exalted our Nature, in being united to our Fleſh.

It ſpeaks the *Comfort* of all true Believers alſo. For now we have a SAVIOUR, who partakes of the ſame Fleſh and Blood with our ſelves, and therefore who ſincerely deſires our Happineſs, who has a Fellow-Feeling with us in all our Sufferings, who knows our Temptations and Sorrows, and has a moſt tender Compaſſion to us under all our Wants and Weakneſs, *who will not ſuffer us to be tempted above what we are able, but will, with the Temptation find out a Way for our eſcape, that we may be able to bear it* (a).

Now the MAN JESUS, in Union to the SON of GOD, is exalted at the right Hand of the Throne of the Majeſty on High, who, having the Dominion put into His Hands, will certainly over-rule all things for the Welfare of His Church; will gather in the whole Number of his Elect, and not ſuffer one of them to be loſt; will cauſe all things to work together for Good to them that Love God; and will ranſom their Bodies from Deſtruction, and bring them to dwell in His Preſence thro'out Eternal Ages.

III. *Laſtly*, Let us all then, make it our great Care, that this *Saviour* be Ours, that

(a) I. *Cor.* X. 13.

we

we are intereſted in Him, and ſhare in His bleſſed Benefits.

This is the great Deſign of the whole Goſpel of *Chriſt*, His Incarnation and Life, His Doctrines and Example, and His Sufferings and Death, to prevail with a guilty World, to ſecure an Intereſt in Him, that they may be ſaved by Him. And if the wondrous Grace of God, in providing ſuch a Saviour for us, ſhould after all be ſlighted by us, and we refuſe to accept of His offered Mercy, and ſubmit our ſelves to Him as our Lord, it will but greatly enhanſe our Account, and encreaſe our Puniſhment, that God has ſent His Son, to appear in our Fleſh, as a *Saviour* for us, but we would not come unto Him, that we might have Life.

Let us all then, be perſwaded to take this *Jeſus* for our *Saviour*, rejoicing in the good Tydings, and praiſing the Grace of God that has provided Him for us, ſaying, in the Doxology of the holy Angels, in my Context, *Glory to God in the higheſt, on Earth Peace, Good-will towards Men!*

Let us receive Him as the anointed of God, and firmly believe all that He has done, and ſuffered for us, and ſpoken to us; and give up our ſelves to Him to be ſaved by Him; and ſubmit our ſelves intirely to His Government, as our LORD; for He will not be our *Saviour*, unleſs we know aſſuredly that

He

He is LORD, as well as CHRIST (*a*).

Think not that this is eno' to entitle you to His Benefits, to call your selves after His Name, or be very fond of keeping a Day in Commemoration of His Birth, while, at the same time, you practically deny Him, by allowing your selves in such Courses of Intemperance, Injustice and Prosanity, as are a scandal to the Christian Profession, and would be a Reproach to a sober Heathen.

'Tis indeed but a common Appendage to vain Superstition, to be mightily concerned for the Outside, and regard the shew only, while the Inward and vital Part of Religion, pretended to be promoted thereby, is greatly neglected. This we have a sad Instance of, in those that are so strongly set to keep a Day in Commemoration of the Birth of *Christ*, (any Day rather than none;) that instead of observing it in an Holy and Religious Manner, and improving it as a Means to mortify Sin, and promote Holyness of Heart and Life, (as one would be ready to suppose, in Remembrance of the Birth of *the Holy Child Jesus*;) it is more generally a Day seperate to Vanity and Folly, to Sin and Debauchery, to Revelling and Drunkenness, like the ancient *Saturnalia* of the Heathen. Would to God that those, who think themselves obliged to keep such a Day, would, at least, think themselves obliged

(*a*) *Ac.* II 36.

also to act the Part of Christians, and how ill in the Face of the *Holy Saviour*, while they pretend to do him Honour. But I hope you have not *so learned Christ*, as to imagine that you honour Him, while you really sacrifice to Devils, in the Indulgence of your Lusts. Let us then learn to Commemorate the Birth of *Christ*, every Day of our Lives, by Living in the constant Remembrance, that *to us there is born a Saviour, Christ the Lord*; that *Christ*, a Saviour from Sin, has appeared in our Nature, has given us a most Holy Law, and set us a most bright Example, has dyed for our Offences, and risen again for our Justification; and as This Grace of God teaches us, let us sincerely *deny Ungodliness and Worldly Lusts, and live soberly, righteously, and Godly, in this present World; presenting our Bodies*, and our Spirits, *to Him, a living Sacrifice, holy and Acceptable, which is but a reasonable Service.*

Thus endeavour, by a truly vertuous and religious Walk, to live the Life of *Christ*, and *shew forth the Praise of Him who hath called you out of Darkness into marvellous Light*; then will the Incarnate Son of God be *your Saviour*, and his Birth will be unto *you good Tydings of great Joy*, and you may with Comfort *look for the Blessed Hope, and glorious appearing of the great God, and our Saviour Jesus Christ, who gave Himself for us, that He might redeem us from*

Iniquity, and purify us to Himself a peculiar People, zealous of Good Works: For then will all the sure Mercies of this *Son of David*, and *Son of God* be your Portion forever; then *all things will be yours, whether the World, or Life or Death, or things present, or things to come, all are yours; for you are Christ's, and Christ is God's.* Amen!

APPENDIX.

APPENDIX.

An Attempt to State the *true Year* of the Birth of CHRIST.

I Readily, and thankfully, acknowledge the Assistance I have received, from Dr. *Prideaux's* noble *Connection of the Old Testament with the New*, which I have chiefly followed in the *Chronology*, and very much so in the Explanation of the Prophecies in the foregoing Discourse; since the Composing of which, Mr. *Whiston's Chronology of the Old Testament, and Harmony of the New*, has fallen into my Hands, which I had not seen before; and the Difference I observed between them, and my own Difficulty in reconciling either of their Accounts to what I tho't the Evangelist *Luke* pointed to us, namely the Age of *JESUS CHRIST*, when He was Baptised, (which would help to Direct us to the Time of His Birth,) has led me to spend more Time, than the First Composing the Sermon would allow me, in a diligent Enquiry into the True Year of the Birth of CHRIST. And tho' it is very apparent that I *now* fix the Birth of CHRIST up-

on a Different Year from that mentioned in the Foregoing Sermon, and go off from it also in ſome other ſmaller Matters; yet, I ſuppoſe, it may well eno' be allowed me, in a more general and common Diſcourſe, to fall in with the Current of the beſt of Writers, in a piece of *Chronology*, while in a more particular and laboured one, afterwards, I ſee reaſon to fix upon other Periods of Time. For having, I think, diligently ſurveyed, and compared, Dr. *Prideaux*, and Mr. *Whiſton*; and taking their Quotations upon Truſt, as well I may, and not having the Authors by me; I conclude I may, with good Reaſon, advance the following Propoſition, wherein I crave Leave to diſſent from thoſe two Great Men; *viz.*

That our Bleſſed Lord and Saviour JESUS CHRIST, was born, ſome Time in *October*, *Anno Jul. Per.* 4711.

To make good this Propoſition, which is ſo New, and different from what all others, that I know of, have ſaid upon this Subject; I ſhall firſt, ſtate the exact Time of our Lords Death, and then produce the Arguments, which ſway with me, to fix his Birth upon the Year mentioned.

I. Our Bleſſed Lord was crucified upon *Friday*, the 15th of *Niſan*, in the Year of the *Jul. Per.* 4746. It is evident, from all the Evangeliſts, that our Lord was crucified upon the

the *Jews Paſſover*, (*a*) which always was 14 Days after the *New-Moon*, which began their Month *Niſan*, their firſt Eccleſiaſtical Month; and it is further evident, from the ſame Evangeliſts, that this 15th of *Niſan*, happened, that Year, upon a *Friday*, (*b*) the Day before the *Paſchal Sabbath*, which was an high Day.

Now Mr. *Whiſton* makes it plain, to a Demonſtration, by calculating the ſeveral *New-Moons*, that the 15th Day of *Niſan*, could fall upon a *Friday*, only in the Year mentioned. For we are, by many other things, confined, in our Enquiry, to three or four Years; and for ſeveral Years, both before and after the 4746th Year of the *Jul. Per.* the Changes of the Moon would admit of no ſuch Conjunction, as *Friday* and the 15th of *Niſan*, but only upon that Year. So that the Year of our Lord's Death, is fixed, and certain, and both Dr. *Prideaux*, and Mr. *Whiſton*, agree in it, that it was *An. P. J.* 4746. in the 19th Year of the Reign of *Tiberius* alone, or his 32d, from his being taken into Partnerſhip in the Empire with *Auguſtus*.

II. The Time of our Saviour's Death being thus fixed; the Arguments, that prove His Birth to have been in the Year 4711. *A. P.*

(*a*) *Matt.* XXVI. 17. *Mark.* XIV. 12. 16. *Luke* XXII. 1. *Joh.* XVIII. 28, 39. (*b*) *Matt.* XVII. 62. XXVIII. 1. *Mark.* XV. 42. *Luke* XXIII 54. *Joh.* XIX. 31.

are,

are, the Age of our Saviour at His Baptism, and Entrance upon His publick Ministry; the Time of *Herod*'s Death; and *Archelaus*'s Banishment; and the Baptist's Conception.

I. JESUS CHRIST was Baptised, and entred upon His publick Ministry, at 30 Years of Age, *An. J. P.* 4714. This appears from these Considerations.

I. It seems Evident (as Mr. *W.* plainly proves, †) that there were *Five* Passovers in the Time of our Lord's Ministry, upon the last of which He died; which five Passovers include Four compleat Years, and brings us back, from 4746, to the Passover in 4742, as the first Passover in our Lords Ministry, mentioned, *Joh.* II. 13.

II. At this First Passover, in the Beginning of the Year 4742, our Lord is apparently, in the Publick Exercise of His Ministerial Office. His Whipping the Buyers, and Sellers, out of the Temple, His having His Disciples about Him, His Discourse of His Death, (taken Notice of, in *John*, *Ch.* II.) as well as His publick Baptizing, (*Joh.* III. 26.) is an evident Proof of this, that JESUS CHRIST was then in the Discharge of His publick Ministry.

III. JESUS CHRIST was Baptised, and entred upon His publick Ministry, some Time before this first Passover. This appears

† *Harm. Ch.* IX.

from

from what the Diſciples of *John* ſay to him, *Joh.* III. 26. *He that was with thee, beyond Jordan, to whom thou bear'ſt Witneſs*, &c. Plainly alluding to what St. *Matthew* tells us, *Ch.* III. 13. *Jeſus cometh from Galilee, to Jordan, unto John to be baptiſed of him*: And from the evident token of His being the promiſed *Meſſiah*, by the Spirits deſcending and reſting upon Him, *John*, from that Time, bears Witneſs to Him, *Joh.* I. 32, 33. And it is further Evident, both from St. *Matthew*, and St. *Luke* (a) that after His Baptiſm, our Lord underwent the Forty Days Faſt, and Temptation, in the Wilderneſs, returned from *Jordan*, to *Galilee*, preached the Goſpel, called (at leaſt ſome of) His Diſciples, and wrought ſeveral Miracles which were Acts of His publick Miniſtry, and then came up to *Jeruſalem*, to the Firſt Paſſover. Now leſs than Half a Year could not well ſuffice for all theſe Tranſaction, and about Half a Year might well eno' give Time for theſe ſeveral Occurrents; ſo that this brings us back from *Niſan*, the *Jews* firſt Month in *An. J. P.* 4742, to about the Feaſt of Tabernacles, in the Month *Tiſri*, their firſt political Month, *An. J. P.* 4741; which Seaſon of the Year has been ſuppoſed, by moſt Expoſitors, to have been the Time of our Lord's Baptiſm, and allows Four Years and an half for His Miniſtry,

(a) *Matt.* Ch. IV. *Luke* Ch. IV.

ſtry, which Mr. *W.* himſelf fixes upon †.

IV. JESUS CHRIST was *Thirty* Years old at His Baptiſm. This the Evangeliſt *Luke* takes particular Notice of, *Ch.* III. 23. *Jeſus Himſelf began to be about Thirty Years of Age.* Mr. *W.* * ſuppoſes, and endeavours to prove, that the *Greek* word, here rendred, *began*, does not relate to the Age of CHRIST, but of His Miniſtry, and renders it, *Jeſus was about* 30 *Years of Age when he began His Miniſtry.* So that the Evangeliſt does not mean the Beginning of CHRIST's *Thirtieth* Year, but rather the Compleating of it, that He was about 30 Years old, ſuppoſe a few Weeks, or Days more or leſs. Now the Age of CHRIST, thus ſpecified by the Evangeliſt, is not connected with the 15th or 12th Year of *Tiberius*, when the Goſpel of the Kingdom firſt began to be preached, as Mr. *W.* ſeems to imagine, but it is plainly connected with His Baptiſm, juſt before ſpoken of, *Luke* III. 12. The particular Remark, in the Beginning of the *Chapter*, of *John Baptiſt*, entring upon his Office, in the 15th or 12th of *Tiberius*, was deſigned to meaſure out the Prophet *Daniel*'s laſt *Week* of Years; for it was exactly *Seven* Years from that Time, to the Death of CHRIST. The *Baptiſt*, who began His Miniſtry at the Paſchal Feaſt, *An. J. P.*

† *Harm.* p. 140. * *Harm.* p. 136.

47-39.

4739. † having confirmed the Covenant; by preaching Repentance, and the near Approach of the Kingdom of Heaven, for the space of two Years and an half, and our Blessed Lord Himself Four Years and an half more. And the Design of the Evangelist, in mentioning the 30 *Years* of CHRIST's Age, in this Place, is to inform us of the Time, not when the Gospel was first preached by *John*, but when our Saviour Himself entred upon His publick Ministry, namely, when he was *Thirty* Years old. So that since our Lord's publick Ministry, at the Time of His Baptism, commenced Four Years and an half before His Death, (which certainly was in *Nisan*, *An. J. P.* 4741) which leads us back to about the middle of the *Jewish Ecclesiastical* Year of the *Feast of Tabernacles*, in the Month *Tisri*, *An. J. P.* 4741, and since our Lord had completed His *Thirtieth Year* at the Time of His Baptism, and entrance upon His Ministry, which carries his back *Thirty* Years more; this strongly concludes that He was born *An. J. P.* 4711, some time in the Month *Tisri*, a Month famous for the sounding of the Trumpet of the Gospel of Peace, and of God's Tabernacling with Men; which *Tisri* answers to Part of our *September*, and Part of our *October*; and so we are brought to the Year, and near the Month fixed upon in the Proposition: which

† Dr. Prid. Con. Vol IV. p. 940.

will be further confirmed by what follows. *II. Herod* dyed the Latter End of the Year *J. P.* 4711. That JESUS CHRIST was born before *Herod's* Death, is evident from the Gospel of *Matthew*, where we have an Account of *Herod's* seeking the Life of CHRIST in His Infancy (*a*); and yet the Birth of CHRIST was not long before the Death of *Herod*.

For the Wise Men go from *Herod* to *Bethlehem*, and find the Virgin and her Child there, where, being very much of a Stranger, as appears by her Lodging, we cannot suppose her to stay longer, than the Business of the Enrollment, or her Child-birth necessitated; nor can it be supposed, that *Herod*, who was then at *Jerusalem*, would wait many Days, for the return of the Wise Men from *Bethlehem* (but about 6 or 7 Miles Distant, e'er he would perceive himself deceived by them, and fall into that Rage, which occasioned the horrid Slaughter of the Young Children, at *Bethlehem*.

Besides *Mary* appears with the Child JESUS, at the Temple, at the End of *Forty Days*, for her Purification; *Luke* II. 22. After which they went down to *Nazareth*, and dwelt there. So that the Flight to *Egypt*, and return from thence, was all over before the Purification; and yet *Herod* was then dead (*b*)

(*a*) *Matt.* Ch. II.
(*b*) *Matt.* II. 20, 22.

all of which as Mr. *W.* † argues, ſhews that the Birth of CHRIST could not be much above a Month before the Death of *Herod*. Mr. *W.* * indeed fixes upon *Nov. An. J. P.* 4710, for the Time of *Herod*'s Death; but tho' it might happen ſome Time in that Month, yet I think it was in the following Year.

For *Herod* is allowed by all, to have reigned 34 Years, (ſomewhat more or leſs,) from the Death of *Antigonus*, the laſt of the *Aſmonæan* Family, and not from his uſurping the Government 3 Years before. Mr. *W.* tells us ‖ that *Jeruſalem* was taken by *Soſius*, and *Herod*, after about half a Years Siege, upon the Latter-End of *June*, *An. J. P.* 4677. and tho' he ſeems to ſuppoſe, the taking of the City, and the Death of *Antigonus*, to have been at one and the ſame Time, or within the Diſtance of Three or Four Days, yet there really was a very conſiderable Space of Time between them. For, Dr. *Prideaux* informs us (*a*) that after the Caption of *Jeruſalem*, and having kept *Antigonus* ſometime in Chains, *Soſius*, upon *Antonies* return out of *Italy*, and coming to *Antioch*, "ſent this Captive "King thither to him. *Antony* at firſt in-"tended to have reſerved him for his Triumph. "But *Herod*, not thinking himſelf ſafe in his

† *Harm.* p. 165. * *Harm.* p. 150. ‖ *Harm* p. 152.
(*a*) *Connec.* Vol. IV. p. 743.

"Kingdom, as long as this Remainder of the "old royal Family continued alive, never "left ſoliciting *Antony*, till at length, "by a great Sum of Money, he obtained that "this poor Prince was put to Death.

Now if we conſider, that ſome Time was elapſed before *Antony* came to *Antioch*, that then *Antigonus* is ſent a Captive in Chains to *Antioch*, above 200 Miles diſtance from *Jeruſalem*, if I miſtake not; and the Pains *Herod* is put to, (which doubtleſs occaſioned the Diſpatch of Meſſengers backwards and forward this 200 Miles,) before he could, overcome the *Ambition* of *Antony*, and compaſs the Death of *Antigonus*: I ſay whoever conſiders this, will ſee it needful to allow, *Two*, if not *Three* Months, from the taking of *Jeruſalem*, to the Death of *Antigonus*; and ſo his Death, and the Date of *Herod*'s Reign, will fall in with the latter End of *Auguſt*, or rather of *September*; to which if we add the 34 Years of *Herod*'s Reign, it brings us down to the latter End of *Auguſt*, or *September*, *An. J. P.* 4711.

Mr. *W.* himſelf ſays †, we muſt look for *Herod*'s Death, as near as poſſible to *July*, *A. J. P.* 4711; (I would rather ſay to *September*, in that Year) and yet he chooſes to place it in *Nov. A. J. P.* 4710, which certainly is further diſtant from the fixed *July*, (much

† *Harm.* p. 153.

further

further from the real *September*) than *Nov. A. J. P.* 4711.

The Difficulty that attends this Matter, seems to arise, from the Uncertainty, whether there were redundant, or defective Months, belonging to *Herod*'s 34 Years; one or other of which appears certain, and yet no ancient Historian has told us which. But tho' this is not handed down to us with Certainty, yet, from what has been observed, we may reasonably conclude, that there were some few Months, over and above 34 Years belonging to *Herod*'s Reign.

For, if *Herod*'s Reign commence from the Time of the taking of *Jerusalem*, in the latter End of *June*, there must be full *Seven* Months deducted out of his 34 Years; but if his Reign Commence from the Death of *Antigonus*, as all Historians agree it does, there must be at least *Nine* or rather *Ten* Months deducted, to bring his Death to the Latter-End of *Nov. An. J. P.* 4710. And doubtless few Historians would call that 34 Years, which really was but 33 Years and some few Months.

But, on the other Hand; if *Herod*'s Reign take its Date from the Caption of *Jerusalem*, then there is scarce *Five* Months, but if, as is the Truth, from the Death of *Antigonus*, then there remains not *Three*, or rather not *Two* Months more than the 34 Years for his Reign, to bring his Death to *Nov. An. J. P.* 4711.

4711. which alſo is the neareſt *Nov.* to *July*, (rather to *Sept.*) *An. J. P.* 4711.

Now it ſeems much more likely, that *Joſephus*, the Jewiſh Hiſtorian, ſhould omit taking Notice of *Two* or *Three* redundant Months, in aſſigning 34 Years to *Herod*'s Reign, than that he ſhould include *Nine* or *Ten* defective ones, much the bigger half of the Year, in the whole Sum of 34 Years, which he tells us *Herod* reigned: and therefore I conclude that *Herod* dyed ſometime in *Nov. An. J. P.* 4711. which will be further evident from the Reign and Baniſhment of *Archelaus*. And if we ſuppoſe, the Tranſactions, from the taking of *Jeruſalem*, to the Death of *Antigonus*, took up 4 or 5 Months, which is not unreaſonable, it is not to be wondered at, that *Joſephus* took no Notice of a few Weeks in the Reign of *Herod*. Since therefore *Herod*'s *Death* was in the latter part of the Year, *J. P.* 4711. our Lords Birth, which preceeded it but a few Weeks, doubtleſs was in the ſame Year, and Month I have advanced in the Propoſition.

III. Archelaus, *Herod*'s Son, after little more than *Nine* Years Reign, was Baniſhed in the Year of the *Julian Period* 4720.

1. There is nothing more clear, (from the Hiſtory of the Goſpel, *Matt.* II. 19, 20, 21, 22,) than that *Archelaus* immediately ſucceeded his Father *Herod*, in the Government of *Judea*, without any conſiderable Space of Time intervening. For *Joſeph* was firſt informed,

formed, of the Death of *Herod*, by an Angel, while as yet the common Report of it had not reached so far as *Egypt*, but about 70 or 80 Miles off; upon which Information, he arises and travels to the Land of *Israel*, and when he comes there, he learns that *Archelaus reigned in Judea, in the Room of his Father Herod*: So that there could be no Interregnum, at most not of a Weeks Length, if of a Days.

2. *Archelaus*'s Reign consisted but of little more than *Nine* Years. Dr. *Prideaux*† assigned the whole Sum of *Ten* Years to the Reign of *Archelaus*; but this seems to have been done to make the Length of his Reign comport with the Death of his Father *Herod*, which he places in *An. J. P.* 4710. Whereas, in Reality, *Archelaus*'s Reign contained but little more than *Nine* Years in it; for Mr. *W.* assures us,* from *Josephus*, that *Archelaus*, the Successor of *Herod*, in *Judea*, reigned somewhat above *Nine* Years, before his Banishment; which plainly speaks but little more than *Nine* Years.

3. *Archelaus*'s Banishment was in the 37th Year of the *Egyptian Æra*. This *Egyptian Æra* had it's Rise from the Conquest of *Egypt*, by *Octavianus*, afterwards *Augustus*, and its Name from the *Actian* Victory, which *Octavianus* obtained over *Antony*, near *Actium*; and was therefore called

† *Connec.* Vol. IV. p. 929. * *Hero.* p. 115.

the

the *Æra* of the *Actiac Victory*. Now Mr. *W.* informs us, † from *Josephus*, that *Archelaus* was banished about the Beginning of the 37th Year of the *Actiac Victory*. Dr. *Prideaux* *acquaints us that this Victory was obtained upon *Sept.* 2d, *An. J. P.* 4683. but then he also assures us, ‖ from *Dion Cassius*, that by a Decree of the *Romans*, the *Æra* of the *Actiac Victory* did not commence, until the 29th of *August*, *An. J. P.* 4684. Almost a full Year after, when *Octavianus* had entirely reduced *Egypt* under his Obedience. So that the *Æra* of the *Actiac Victory* being certainly fixed upon *Aug.* 29. *An. J. P.* 4684, we must necessarily understand *Josephus* who wrote about 148 Years after (*a*) to date his 37 Years from thence; or else we must suppose him to give us an *Æra* not known or used in the World, by any but himself; which is altogether unreasonable.

Mr. *W.* from *Dion Cassius*, places the Banishment of *Archelaus*, *An. J. P.* 4719. but it is very evident, that tho' 37 Years from the *Time* of the *Victory* brings us to 4719, yet not so from the Date of the *Æra*. For 37 compleat Years added to *Aug.* 29. *An. J. P.* 4684. the true *Æra* of the *Actiac Victory* brings us down to *Aug.* 29. *An. J. P.* 4721. But because *Josephus* says *Archelaus* was

† *Harm.* p. 155. * *Connec.* Vol. IV. p. 818. ‖ p. 833.
(*a*) *Josephus* wrote his History 86 Years after *Christ*, i. e. *An. J. P.* 4832.

banished

baniſhed in the *Beginning* of the 37th Year, let us deduct 8 or 9 Months, from *Aug.* 29. 4721, and it leaves us in the Latter-End of *Nov.* or *Dec. An. J. P.* 4720, in the Beginning of the 37th Year of the *Actiac Victory*. And accordingly, Dr. *Prideaux* † Ends the Reign of *Archelaus* in the Year, *J. P.* 4720. So that the Latter End of the Year *J. P.* 4720. is undoubtedly fixed for the true Time of *Archelaus's* Baniſhment. And from *Dec. An. J. P.* 4720. let us deduct the ſomewhat above *Nine Years* of *Archelaus's* Reign, and it carries us back to *Nov. An. J. P.* 4711. for the Commencing of his Reign, upon the Death of his Father *Herod.*

Thus the Reign and Baniſhment of *Archelaus*, confirms the Death of *Herod*, and the Birth of CHRIST, to have been, *An. J. P.* 4711. as is aſſerted in the Propoſition.

4. The Conception of *John Baptiſt*, was ſometime in *Auguſt*, *An. J. P.* 4710.

1. It is well known, that the *Jewiſh Prieſts* were divided into, Twenty four Courſes, and that each Courſe ſerved it's Week at the Temple: And we are aſſured, that *Zachariah*, the Father of *John*, was of the Courſe of *Abiah*, (*Luke* I. 5.) which was the *Eighth* Courſe in Order. (I. *Chron.* XXIV. 10.)

The Order of theſe Courſes was reſtored after the Captivity, and whatever Interruption was given to them, during the broken State

† See his *Chronological Table*, at the End of his IV. *Vol.*

of the *Jews*, before the Time of the *Maccabees*, yet there was none after *Judas Maccabeus* reſtored them, till the final Determination of them at the Siege of *Jeruſalem*, by *Titus*, as *Scaliger* obſerves. †

Now Mr. *W.* informs us ‖ from the famous *Jewiſh Chronicle*, that when the Temple was burnt, by the *Romans*, upon *Aug.* 4th *An. J. P.* 4783, it was the Courſe of *Joiarib*, or the firſt Courſe, and the Sabbath concluding that Weekly Courſe; which alſo he ſhews, from the firſt Sabbath after the Reſtitution of the daily Sacrifice by the *Maccabees*.

2. It is plain, that *Zachariah*'s Courſe, and the *Baptiſt*'s Conception, muſt be more than a Year before the Birth of CHRIST. Without this Allowance, there would not be Room for *Eliſabeth*'s Hiding herſelf Five Months, before the *Virgin*'s Conception, and for the Time of the holy *Virgin*'s Prægnancy, to her Deliverance.

3. *Zachariah*'s Courſe went out upon *Aug.* 5th *An. J. P.* 4710. Having taken the Pains to calculate the Courſes of the *Prieſts*, from *Joiarib*, the firſt, finiſhing his Courſe upon *Aug.* 4th *An. J. P.* 4783. I find *Zachariah*'s, or the *Eighth* Courſe to go out, *Aug.* 5th *An. J. P.* 4710. which fixes the Time of the *Baptiſt*'s Conception to the Beginning of that *Auguſt*; and allows between

† See *W. Harm.* p. 156. ‖ *Harm.* p. 157.

Two

Two and Three Months more than a Year to the Birth of CHRIST, in *October An. J. P.* 4711.

Mr. *Whiſton*, by a like Calculation, obſerves the Time of *Zachariah*'s Miniſtration to fall upon the Beginning of *Sept.* as it truly does, *An. J. P.* 4709. and he Aſſigns *October* 25th the Year after, for the Time of the Birth of CHRIST. But if he had more thorowly re-remarked the Times, I imagine, he would have ſeen, that his fixing *Zachariah*'s Courſe to the Beginning of *Sept. An. J. P.* 4709. as he neceſſarily muſt, for that Year, would have deſtroyed his main Deſign, of aſcertaining the Birth of CHRIST upon *Octo.* 25. *A. J. P.* 4710, inſtead of proving it.

For the *Eighth* Courſe, to which *Zachariah* belonged, finiſhing their Miniſtration upon *Sept.* 3d, the Sabbath in the firſt Week of that Month, *An. J. P.* 4709, we need only to allow Two Days, from thence, for *Zachariah*'s return to his Houſe at *Hebron*, about 30 miles Diſtant from *Jeruſalem*, and for his Wife *Eliſabeth*'s Conception, which brings us to *Sept.* 5th. From thence we muſt allow *five Jewiſh* Months, or 21 Weeks, and 3 Days, for the Time, in which *Eliſabeth* is ſaid to *hide herſelf*, which brings to *Feb.* 2d, in the Beginning of the Year *J. P.* 4710. We muſt, doubtleſs, allow another Week, at leaſt, for the Propriety of the Angel's Speech to *Mary* (*Luke*, I. 36. *This is the Sixth Month with her*

her that was called barren; which leads us to *Feb.* 9th; and the *Nine* Months, of the *Virgin*'s going with Child, will unavoidably bring us to *Nov.* 9th. So that by this Reconing the *Virgin* muſt neceſſarily have brought forth her firſt born Son, ſomething more than a Fortnight before her full Time, which may, by no means, be admitted. And therefore upon Mr. *Whiſton*'s own Principles, of *Zachariah*'s Miniſtration going out, in the Beginning of *September*, *An. J. P.* 4709. JESUS CHRIST cannot be ſuppoſed to be born, upon *October* 25. *An. J. P.* 4710. And if the Allowances ſhould be made greater than I have propoſed, (ſmaller they cannot be) it will render it ſtill but ſo much the more unlikely, if not impoſſible.

But, on the other hand, *Zachariah*'s Courſe going out upon the *Fifth* of *Auguſt*, *An. J. P.* 4710, as I have obſerved, the *Two Days* Allowance for his Return to his Houſe, and for *Eliſabeth*'s Conception, makes *Aug.* 7th for the Time of *John* the *Baptiſt*'s Conception; from whence, the *Five Months*, or 21 Weeks and 3 Days, of *Eliſabeth*'s Concealment; brings us to *Jan.* 4th the Beginning of the *Julian* Year 4711; and a Weeks Entrance into the *Sixth* Month, as before, leads us to the *Eleventh* of *January*, for the Time of the *Virgin*'s Conception; and *Nine* Months, from *Jan.* 11th to the Time of the Birth, carries us down to *October* 11th in the Year

of

of the *Julian Period* 4711, the Year and Month propoſed in the Propoſition. And no other Year but this will receive any Evidence, for the Birth of CHRIST in *October*, from the Principle of *Zachariah*'s Miniſtration, calculated from *Joiarib*'s being the firſt Courſe, and finiſhing his Miniſtration upon *Aug.* 4th *An. J. P.* 4783. but if the Principles are good, (and they ſeem to me to be ſo) then we receive from them a very ſtrong, and concluſive Evidence, of the Birth of CHRIST, upon, or about the *Eleventh* of *October*, *An. J. P.* 4711. And if the *Fifteenth* of *Tiſri*, ſhould have happened upon the *Third* of our *October*, that Year, as the *Fifteenth* of *Niſan* did upon the *Third* of our *April*, *Thirty-four* Years and an *half* after, when our Lord was crucified, then the Birth of CHRIST, falling upon the 11th of our *October*, was exactly upon the *Eighth*, that *great and laſt Day*, of the Feaſt of Tabernacles, wherein they were to *keep an holy Convocation to the Lord, and offer an Offering made by Fire unto the Lord*.† ; for then the Son of God came to Tabernacle with Men, (and He did but litterally Tabernacle with them, at His Birth, in the Inn) in order to offer Himſelf, to His Eternal Father, a Sacrifice made by Fire, by the Fire of the Divine Anger falling upon Him, in the Day when he took our Infirmities, and bore the Iniquities of us all.

† *Levit.* XXIII. 34, 35, 36.

Since

Since therefore, there is ſuch a wonderful Concurrence of all theſe Circumſtances, the *Baptiſm* of our *Saviour*, at the Age of 30 *Years*; the *Death* of *Herod*; and the *Reign*, and *Baniſhment* of *Archelaus*; and the Time of the *Baptiſt*'s Conception; all of them ſo evidently fixing us to the Year of the *Julian Period*, 4711, and to the Month of *October*: I cannot but look upon it, as more than a vain Conjecture, even, an eſtabliſhed Propoſition, That JESUS CHRIST, our Bleſſed *Saviour*, was born ſome Time in *October*, *An. J. P.* 4711: Two Years, and two Months, and ſome Days, before the common *Æra*.

FINIS.

7 AP 64

ERRATA.

PAge 7. l. 6 r. Suppoſititious. p. 15. l. 4. for ſ put ſ. p. 18. l. 20 for Foreign r. Soveraign. p. 19. l. 8. a ſomething. p. 20. l. 4. r. *a Lawgiver*. p. 26. l. 25. add, dyed.